

tian because I have not the experience you tell of. I was never plunged into despair on account of sin, I never had guilt and remorse to stab and prick and torture my conscience and rob me of all my peace of mind, as you have had. I was never thrilled and transported with the joy of pardon as some one whom I know was, and I have never had the same peace and joy in believing that some others have had, and because my experience has not been what I hoped and expected it would be, because it is not what yours has been. I fear I am not a Christian." There are many hearts that are burdened with fear like this. Tell them, my brother, that the religious experience of each one of us is the experience of a particular kind of human temperament, and that our experiences are as unlike as we ourselves are unlike each other. Tell them, too, if they can not feel as they would like they can at least do as they are bidden and then leave both their salvation and the unconsciousness of it with God. Often, too, this same difference in feeling becomes an obstacle in the way of penitents, sometimes keeping them from Christ. Men say they would like to become Christians but they do not have yet just the feeling they would like, perhaps they have not had that awful crushing sense of guilt that others have had, and they hesitate and draw back from laying hold on Christ. Spurgeon once said, "Those who will not accept Jesus unless they feel this or that, trust their own changeable feelings but will not trust God's appointed Saviour. Such make a god of their sorrow and a savior of their grief." I know there is no form of grief so intolerable, no sorrow so bitter as that experienced by a tender conscience under the lash of self condemnation. Peace of mind is impossible; there is utter dissatisfaction with one's self and the soul is humiliated with a sense of guilt. There is sometimes such a sense of unworthiness, of uncleanness, that the soul abhors itself. But there may be, there often is, genuine conviction without such intensity of feeling. It then becomes a harmful and dangerous thing to teach that conviction in every case consists in certain feelings and frames of mind that are invariable. Let us then in our preaching recognize the differences which God has made in men and not insist that the operation of the Spirit shall have a like manifestation in all.

I have spoken of the emotional in religion, not of its value or universality, but as dependent upon the temperament and consequently manifesting itself in varying measure in different individuals. In all the affairs of religion the emotions mean a large part. We may contemplate a mathematical truth perhaps without emotion of any kind, but we cannot con-

sider a moral or spiritual truth without the emotions coming into play. An emotionless religious life would be drudgery, it would be hard work; it would lack enthusiasm and spontaneity and power. The will to do God's will is given force and direction by the feelings of reverence and love. Joy and peace, the fruits of service, stimulate us to a better service and make serving not a task but a pleasure. And yet the putting forth of the will by which we yield ourselves to God and become his, the supreme act in religion, makes no demand upon the emotions whatever; it makes no demand upon excitement nor religious enthusiasm. The surrender, the one essential thing in becoming a Christian, does not get its importance from either the presence or absence of feelings; it is rather, as some one has said, the calm and quiet judgment of an honest conscience. The character of one's feelings at such a moment can give no added value to the act. If a man's faith be religious enough to prompt him to conform his life to the divine pattern, it is a matter of less importance whether it be intelligent enough to give him at all times a feeling of perfect assurance. I do not think that we should make feelings important and desirable as it is, an object of direct search. Comply rather with the conditions of spiritual life and full, bounding, healthful life will come unsought and with it will come the joy of living. Many a man employs his feelings as a barometer by which to gauge his spiritual state, and because he finds his feelings variable, he is alternately lifted to the highest joy and driven to the deepest dejection and yet his real relation to God and salvation has not been changed in all these successive mutations in the state of his feelings.

It is our privilege to be both safe and happy, safe first and happy afterwards, tho it is conceivable that one may sometimes be safe and yet not perfectly happy. The one is secured by loyalty to duty and obedience to the divine law; the other follows as the result of such safety and is dependent; among other things, upon the intelligence of one's conception of the great and perfect salvation which he has embraced. For this reason it is not wise to make feeling the test of our relation to God. It is better to say: "I am happy because I know I am saved," than to say: "I know I am saved because I feel so happy."

To analyze our faith, to dissect our emotions, to scrutinize our frames of mind that we may learn whether we are right with God or not is not the wisest, not the best course. Have faith in God whether you find any ground for having faith in yourself or not.

"Still dost thou wait for feeling? Dost thou say, Fain would I love and

trust but hope is dead; I have no faith and without faith who may rest in the blessing which is only shed upon the faithful? I must stand and wait. Not so. The Shepherd does not ask of thee faith in thy *faith* but only faith in Him. And this he meant in saying, "Come to me." In light or darkness seek to do his will, and learn the work of faith to Jesus still."

CONVICTIONLESS CHRISTIANS

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We live in an age in which we are either exerting positive or negative traits. We are living in a time wherein the majority of mankind must be characterized as being in the negative as regards to life's duties.

Today numbers of professed Christian lives are negations when compared with the life manifested by our Saviour.

True we can not all be men of the strength of Paul, Luther or Knox, but there is not a living being but can give light to the extent of one candle-power.

How much better it would be if all in our land were light givers, instead of light receivers. If all who profess Christ would shine, no occasion would arise when a Christian's light would be needed to illuminate a fellow Christian, but our Christian light could shine in the dark places on earth and reach sinful hearts.

I am convinced these elements are lacking today because of a lack of conviction on the part of professed Christians.

We have too much Sunday religion and in the week do as you please. Too many Christians whose religion is a social adjunct, or is for pecuniary purposes, or is to seek the applause of the world, i. e., they court popular opinion in their selfish desire to gratify their ambition and win the plaudits of this world.

When I find men of this stripe I truly think I can say they need more conviction and genuine conversion.

What I mean is this, such men's carnal nature must receive such a shock as never to recover. They must be made to realize that human device and desire is sin, but with self crucified they can enthrone Christ in the heart and along all lines of truth will they have deep convictions.

I will mention a few classes of convictionless Christians.

I. Preachers who do not know what they believe, but who set their sails to catch every breeze that comes along.

Doctrinally they are as silent as clams. Definitely they know nothing so well as they know how to tickle the ears of their hearers. Their cry is "only believe" and then all will be well. No wonder we find men who say "if my conscience approves my course I will be saved tho my course